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Morristown National Historical Park

General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement
2003

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MORRISTOWN NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

FINAL GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

National Park Service, Northeast Region
Boston Support Office
Park Planning and Special Studies
15 State Street, 10th Floor
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Muralist Jay H. Matternes' modern conception of the Continental Army camped across Jockey Hollow during the winter of 1779–1780. Some 12,000 soldiers organized in ten infantry brigades patiently endured exceptionally harsh weather and inconsistent supply in this city of log huts. The view is toward Morristown in the northeast where General Washington and the artillery wintered.

Cover photograph © Eastern National Parks



MORRISTOWN NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

FINAL GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Produced by the Boston Support Office, Planning and Legislation
with the Morristown National Historical Park, Morristown, New Jersey.
National Park Service, Northeast Region
U.S. Department of the Interior

New Jersey, 2003

This Final General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (GMP/EIS) describes the resource conditions and visitor experiences that should exist at Morristown National Historical Park over the next 15 to 20 years. It presents a proposed action (Alternative C) and two alternatives for the long-term management of the park that are consistent with the park's mission, National Park Service policy, and other laws and regulations. The alternatives incorporate various management prescriptions and zones to ensure that the park's resources are preserved, and that the public can enjoy the park. The GMP/EIS assesses the consequences that can be anticipated from implementing the various alternatives. Impact topics include the park's cultural and natural resources, visitor experience, park operations, the socioeconomic environment, impairment of resources, and sustainability.

The Draft GMP/EIS was available for public review from March 7, 2003 to May 9, 2003. Copies of the comment letters received during that period, and the National Park Service's responses to those comments are included in the final document. Draft text and graphics were refined and clarified where necessary, and respond to the substantive public comments.

The Final GMP/EIS will be available to the public for 30 days. Following this, a Record of Decision (ROD) will be signed indicating which alternative has been selected as the proposed plan, and authorizing the National Park Service to implement the plan.

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SUMMARY

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"On the 14th we reached this wilderness, about three miles from Morristown, where we are to build log huts for winter quarters... The ground is marked out, and the soldiers have commenced cutting down the timber of oak and walnut, of which we have a great abundance."

Dr. James Thatcher, Stark's Brigade



SUMMARY

PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR THE PLAN

This Final General Management Plan/ Environmental Impact Statement for Morristown National Historical Park proposes a long-term approach to managing the park, consistent with the park's mission and NPS policy and other laws and regulations, over the next 15 to 20 years. Morristown National Historical Park, the first national historical park in the national park system, was established in 1933 to preserve the lands and resources associated with the winter encampments of the Continental Army during the War for Independence. At Morristown, General George Washington demonstrated his superb leadership by holding the army together despite seemingly overwhelming difficulties; and his officers and men demonstrated their fortitude and dedication.

The park is comprised of 1,697.55 acres situated in north central New Jersey, approximately 30 miles west of New York City. The park contains four separate units, each of which is associated with the Revolutionary War winter encampments of the Continental Army.

The current master plan for the park was completed in 1976. Although it continues to be used as a general guide for operations, it is no longer adequate to address the policy and operational issues facing park managers. Since the completion of the 1976 plan, there have been a number of significant changes in the park's resources, visitors, and setting, in addition to changes in NPS policy—most of which were not anticipated in 1976. Among the major issues identified during the GMP process are the need to:

- Improve the protection and use of the park's museum and collections.
- Plan for the sustainable management of park forests as a dynamic ecological resource.
- Direct the management of the park's cultural landscapes (a type of resource barely recognized in 1976).



The Ford Mansion served as General George Washington's military headquarters during the winter of 1779–80. Photo by Jim Holcomb.

- Protect the historic setting and scenic beauty of park lands from adjacent development.
- Direct the management of lands added to the park since the previous plan.
- Protect park lands from sound and air pollution, especially that generated by Interstate-287.
- Support enhanced interpretation of the winter encampments and other important historic values.
- Interpret the historical aspects of the park to visitors primarily interested in its scenic and recreational qualities.
- Evaluate the potential for a park–town shuttle transportation system.
- Examine the park's role in historical, recreational, and conservation initiatives in the region.

ALTERNATIVES AND THEIR ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

After completing extensive research and consulting with the public and with park partners, the planning team developed three management alternatives for the park. Each alternative provides a cohesive rationale that shapes a vision for the park's resources and visitors. Although the philosophies are different, each alternative is consistent with the park's legisla-

tion, supports the park's mission, and is feasible. The alternatives share many proposals, but take different approaches to addressing some of the main issues and would thus have differing physical consequences.

Alternative A presents the so-called “no action” alternative required by law. This alternative represents a comparative baseline. Current practices would continue with current plans remaining in force. All projects under approved plans could be carried out; however, it might be difficult to respond to conditions that have changed since the 1976 master plan. Actions that might likely result from adopting this alternative include:

- Modest improvements are made to the museum for collections storage and exhibits.
- Forest management continues to be limited.
- Interpretation remains centered on the encampments.
- An interpretive shuttle is developed in Jockey Hollow.
- Land acquisition is limited to existing acreage ceiling; up to 8.56 acres.
- Participation in regional initiatives is minor.

Estimated costs: \$2.35–\$2.8 million for annual operations (the 2002 budget was \$2.13 million); \$2.8–\$3.35 million for planning and construction; and \$1.5–\$2.0 million for land acquisition.

Implementation of Alternative A would likely have major, adverse, long-term impacts on historic landscapes (due to unmanaged change in the historic forest, and loss of potentially significant commemorative features), and on the collections, because storage conditions would remain inadequate. There would likely be major, adverse, long-term impacts to park vegetation due to unmanaged change in the historic forest. Inadequate facilities, confusing circulation, and a narrow interpretive focus would have an adverse long-term impact on visitor experience. Major, beneficial, long-term impacts could result from implementing an interpretive shuttle in Jockey

Hollow. Inefficient administrative space and a restrictive scope for partnerships would produce an adverse but minor impact on park operations. Inadequate collections storage facilities, the changing forest character, and harmful development on adjacent land under this alternative would threaten the sustainability of park resources and values.

Alternative B would suggest, to the fullest extent possible, the character of the park during the encampment period of 1777–82. It recognizes that a completely faithful restoration of those conditions is unattainable and, in some ways, undesirable. This alternative attempts to create a meaningful visitor experience through direct contact with the physical landscape conditions encountered during the encampments. Paradoxically, although it seeks to evoke a less complex time, this alternative could entail the most extensive alteration of existing conditions. Actions that might likely result from adopting this alternative include:

- The museum is rehabilitated and a 5,000–10,000-square-foot addition is constructed to improve collections storage and exhibits. The proposed locations for the addition are either at the rear of the museum or along either side, set back from its south façade.
- A cultural landscape treatment plan integrates cultural and natural resource management objectives to protect cultural resources, historic character, and sustain the park's mixed hardwood forest.
- Interpretation centers exclusively on the encampments (similar to Alternative A). Landscape vignettes are created along historic road corridors in Jockey Hollow to suggest aspects of the encampments.
- A park–town shuttle is developed with partners to serve multiple units.
- The acreage ceiling is increased to permit acquisition of up to 500 acres on a willing-seller basis to protect park resources and values.
- The park is a leader in regional initiatives.

Estimated costs: \$2.75–\$3.25 million for annual operations; \$11.0–\$13.25 million for planning and construction (\$3.5–\$5.0 million potentially donated); and up to \$20 million for land acquisition (half potentially donated).

Implementation of Alternative B would have a cumulative major beneficial impact on cultural resources, resulting from landscape and museum rehabilitation, increased acreage ceiling, integrated management of the forest, and increased stabilization of archeological resources. Removal of potentially significant commemorative resources, such as the Caretaker's Cottage, would have long-term impacts of undetermined type and intensity. There would likely be major, beneficial, long-term impacts to park vegetation due to integrated management of the forest. Landscape and museum rehabilitation, improved forest management, improved orientation, new landscape vignettes, treatment of ecological themes, and implementation of a park–town shuttle would be expected to have a major, long-term, beneficial impact on visitor experience. Park operations impacts would be beneficial, minor–moderate, and long-term resulting from increased staff, improved administrative space, and greater scope for partnerships. Increased visitation, staff, and new projects under this alternative would likely have a beneficial, long-term impact on the socioeconomic environment. Proper collections storage facilities, increased stabilization of archeological resources, sustaining the historic character of the forest, and increased land protection would have a beneficial overall effect on sustainability.

Alternative C would emphasize the encampment period; however, it would also recognize the efforts of successive generations (1873–1942) to protect, interpret, and commemorate that period. It would rely more on interpretive methods to present a scene evocative of the encampment period. This alternative would also preserve selected 19th- and 20th-century conditions and features added to the historic scene, and might draw on them to illustrate the history of the park resources. Alternative C has been identified as the proposed action. Actions that might

likely result from adopting this alternative include:

- The museum is rehabilitated and a 5,000–10,000-square-foot addition is constructed to improve collections storage and exhibits (same as Alternative B). The proposed locations for the addition are along either side of the museum (as in Alternative B) and may extend south of its south façade.
- A cultural landscape treatment plan integrates cultural and natural resource management objectives to protect cultural resources, historic character, and sustain the park's mixed hardwood forest. (Same as Alternative B; however, landscape vignettes are not created in Jockey Hollow.)
- Interpretation remains centered on the encampments, but treats other themes, including commemoration and historic preservation.
- A park–town shuttle is developed with partners to serve multiple units (same as Alternative B).
- The acreage ceiling is increased to permit acquisition of up to 500 acres on a willing-seller basis to protect park resources and values (same as Alternative B).
- The park is a leader in regional initiatives (same as Alternative B).

Estimated costs: \$2.75–\$3.25 million for annual operations; \$10.0–\$12.0 million for planning and construction (\$3.5–\$5.0 million potentially donated); and up to \$20 million for land acquisition (half potentially donated).

Impacts on cultural resources would be the same as Alternative B; however, potentially significant commemorative resources would not be removed. On natural resources, impacts would be the same as Alternative B; however, landscape vignettes would not be developed. Impacts on all other aspects of the park from this alternative would be the same as Alternative B. As the environmentally preferred alternative, Alternative C will cause the least damage to the biological and physical environment and will best protect, preserve, and enhance historic, cultural, and natural resources.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The park is comprised of 1,697.55 acres situated in north central New Jersey, approximately 30 miles west of New York City. It falls in two congressional districts: the 11th and 12th, now represented by Rodney Frelinghuysen (R) and Rush Holt (D). The park contains four geographically separate units, each of which are associated with the Revolutionary War winter encampments of the Continental Army.

- *Washington's Headquarters* (approximately 10 acres), located in the town of Morristown, contains the Ford Mansion (1772), which served as General George Washington's headquarters during the winter of 1779–80. The house is furnished and open to the public. The adjacent museum, completed in 1937, houses the park's extensive collections of Revolutionary War materials, archives, and artifacts, serves as the park's administrative office, and functions as the main visitor contact station for the park.

- *Fort Nonsense* (approximately 35 acres) encompasses a prominent hill approximately 1 mile west of Washington's Headquarters overlooking the town of Morristown. Here the soldiers dug trenches and raised embankments in 1777 on the orders of General Washington, who wanted the strategic crest fortified. Visitors enjoy long views from the hilltop and see the footprint of the Upper Redoubt traced in small granite blocks.

- *Jockey Hollow* (approximately 1,330 acres), lying approximately 3 miles southwest of Fort Nonsense, is the site of the "log-house city" constructed by some 10,000 troops during the severe winter of 1779–80. The Grand Parade field, and the farmsteads of Henry Wick and Joshua Guerin, are also in the unit. The landscape consists of rolling hills covered with a mixed hardwood forest. Visitor services include the restored Wick House, recreations of several soldiers' huts, a visitor center, parking lots, numerous hiking trails, and a one-way loop road.

- *New Jersey Brigade* (approximately 321 acres) preserves the site of the encampment of 1,000 troops from the New Jersey Brigade in 1779–80. Principally rolling hills supporting a mixed hardwood forest, it is located about 1 mile southwest of the main encampment area at Jockey Hollow. The former Cross Estate is also part of the unit.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The Draft GMP/EIS was available for public review from March 7, 2003 to May 9, 2003. The vast majority of public comments received express support for Alternative C (the proposed action). Other comments recommend further increasing the park's acreage ceiling; ask the park to propose specific actions regarding visitor circulation; ask the park to develop a specific deer management plan; and anticipate the need for further public review when implementation plans are developed. Copies of the comment letters and the National Park Service's responses to those comments are included in Appendix IV. Draft text and graphics were refined and clarified where necessary, and respond to the public comments.

The proposed action enjoys considerable support, assessed in formal public meetings, newsletters, special briefings, discussions with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, public review of the draft plan, and the Superintendent's numerous consultations with state (including the State Historic Preservation Office) and local governments.

NEXT STEPS

The Final GMP/EIS will be available to the public for 30 days. If no comments requiring major document revision are received during this waiting period, a Record of Decision (ROD) will be signed indicating which alternative has been selected as the proposed plan, and authorizing the National Park Service to implement the plan.



Figure 1: Regional Context



Figure 2: Park Vicinity